



1991 and 2010 Between -Satpanth Jamat -History (35)

All Items on <https://archive.org/details/realpatidar>



realpatidar.com

A Brief History of

Full Library on <https://realpatidar.com/library>



ISMAILI SATPANTH JAMAT
IN ISLAM

**An Historical Review spanning 1900 years of
development of SATPANTH JAMAT**

Abualy Aziz

GINAN PROJECT SERIES No.2

Vancouver

realpatidar.com



Real Patidar Library

<https://www.realpatidar.com/library>

This book/literature/article/material may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The library does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The library shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.realpatidar.com>

About Real Patidar books

Real Patidar's mission is to organize the information on Satpanth religion, which is a Nizari Ismaili sect of Shia branch of Islam, and to make it universally accessible and useful. Real Patidar Books helps readers discover the material on Satpanth online while helping authors and researchers in their studies. You can know more by visiting <http://www.realpatidar.com>

You can resize and move this box in any PDF Application like Adobe Acrobat Reader.

No specific pages. See whole book.
References by: RealPatidar.com



1991 and 2010 Between -Satpanth Jamat -History (35)

realpatidar.com

A Brief History of

**ISMAILI SATPANTH JAMAT
IN ISLAM**

**An Historical Review spanning 1900 years of
development of SATPANTH JAMAT**

Abualy Aziz

GINAN PROJECT SERIES No.2

Vancouver

realpatidar.com



1991 and 2010 Between -Satpanth Jamat -History (35)

realpatidar.com

DEDICATION

TO THE SATPANTH JAMAT OF THE TRUE BELIEVERS,
PERPETUALLY EXISTING ON THIS EARTH, EVER
SINCE THE APPEARANCE OF THE FIRST *INSAN*

"History invites two elements, the creative and the conservative. The historical process would not be possible without their union. By the conservative element I mean the tie with the spiritual past, an inner tradition and an acceptance of the sacred heritage of the past. But history also demands a dynamic creative element, a creative purpose and sequence, an urge towards self-fulfilment. Thus that free audacity and creative principle co-exist with an inner tie and profound communion with the past. The absence of either of these elements invalidates the postulates of history."

(Berdayeuv as cited in Haddad. P.71)

DISCLAIMER

ANY/ALL REFERENCES TO WORDS 'MAN' OR 'MANKIND' ARE MADE IN PURELY GENERIC TERMS AND ARE NOT USED TO DENOTE ANY PARTICULAR GENDER.



realpatidar.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRELUDE	4
INTRODUCTION	5
The First House of Worship	5
The Satpanth Jamat - 1900 years ago.	5
HISTORY OF THE SATPANTH JAMAT	8
JAMAT IN ARABIA	9
JAMAT IN TAJIKISTAN	10
JAMAT IN SYRIA	11
JAMAT IN NORTH AFRICA	11
JAMAT IN IRAN	12
JAMAT IN INDIA	13
JAMAT IN AFRICA	15
JAMAT IN EUROPE	16
JAMAT IN NORTH AMERICA	16
JAMAT IN OTHER COUNTRIES	16
HISTORY OF JAMATKHANA	17
THE USE OF MOSQUE	18
GUTH JAMAT	21
D A R K H A N A	21
CODE OF CONDUCT IN JAMATKHANA.	23
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25
GLOSSARY	26

realpatidar.com



PRELUDE

Historical and cultural events that occur over time are often forgotten if they are not recorded either in oral or written forms and passed on to the next generation. History is made at every moment but it must be recorded for the future generations. Unfortunately, much of our past history has been lost and whatever material is available is mostly apologetic or polemical.

I have taken on this task of tracing the historical development of the Satpanth jamat since 1900 years. As our Holy Imam has often mentioned, it is important to know the history of our jamat and how it took on different expressions with different people at different times. I frequently use the word SATPANTH (meaning True Path) for our Ismaili Tariqah because our Tariqah is True Islam, which is complete submission to the Will of God. The sun, the moon, the planets, the stars, the galaxies, the universes and whatever is in them, all and everything obey the Laws of the Creator, the Almighty. The entire creation is on Satpanth - True Path. Only man is often ungrateful. We call our Ismaili Tariqah - the 'SAT PANTH', the True Path mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, (1:5 and 98:5).

Compiling the history of the Satpanth jamat and *jamatkhanas* is a daunting task. Although the starting point of this history is at the time of the Holy Prophet Mohammed, (salallahu alayhi wa Aale'hi wassallem) and the Holy Imam Mowla Murtaza Ali, the Satpanth jamat existed before that; to trace this history will be the central focus of the first part of this book.

After the demise of Holy Prophet Mohammed, the last Messenger of Allah, the Divine Guidance continued through Mowla Ali and will, Inshallah, continue till the end of the world. It is a promise of Allah. Muslims have forgotten the reality. At Ghadir the Holy Prophet affirmed to the huge assembly of more than a hundred thousands Muslims, men and women, that the guidance would continue after his departure through Ali, the Chosen. The Holy Messenger made it clear that those who considered him their Master, Ali, too, was their Master. The guidance was (and is) not for every Muslim; it was only for those who had accepted Mohammed as their Master and history tells us that every Muslim did not accept him as his Master. Many who had given allegiance to Ali at Ghadir e Khumm, backed down after the death of the Holy Prophet. Allah consoles His Messenger not to grieve about those who say "We believe" but their hearts believe not (5:41)

A fraction of the Umma remained honest to God and His Messenger. This was the Satpanth jamat who had to face persecution, suffering and tribulation for the sake of their iman.

This volume has been compiled with the youth in mind. There is growing need for our youth to understand the historical development of our faith and its practices. As Hazar Imam has emphasised

"... that the only thing that can carry you, if you were to get into crisis here or anywhere, or anything else, the only thing that can carry you through the crisis happily, even though you may have worldly difficulties is ima'n (Faith)...and this ima'n has carried the jamats through nineteen hundred years of history. And this is a tradition. This is something which I want you always to remember and to teach to your children and their children."

(Nairobi. 7, September 1963)

VANCOUVER

realpatidar.com



1991 and 2010 Between -Satpanth Jamat -History (35)

October, 2001 realpatidar.com

Bismillah hir Rehman'ir Raheem

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of his existence, man has been taught by the Divine Messengers, sent by God to guide mankind, to believe in and worship the only Supreme Lord of the Universe. Belief in the Supreme Being is naturally imprinted deeply in human mind since birth which man, throughout his life, expresses through worship. For this purpose man created a place where he would sit in peace and pray. Such a place -place of worship - was considered sacred.

Man is a social animal and likes to live in a group or community. For this reason the Prophets had always encouraged mankind to pray in congregation. Special places were built for this purpose, to keep these places sacred, away from worldly activities. As the human race evolved mentally and spiritually and developed various social systems, sacred houses of worship were built according to the faith of the adherents. This was the beginning of different traditions.

The First House of Worship

According to the Holy Torah, the first house of worship was built by Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) (Genesis 12:7). There is a verse in an earlier chapter: "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden." (Gen.4:16). It means that there was a house where the Lord was 'present'; and Cain went out after worship. This shows that there was a house of God during the time of Adam. The Holy Qura'n confirms it: "Lo, the first Sanctuary appointed for mankind was that at Becca*, a blessed place, a guidance to the peoples." (H.Q. 3:96). This house was destroyed in the Flood during the time of Prophet Noah, which was raised by Prophet Ibrahim and his son Prophet Ismail.(H.Q.2:125-127). .

The Satpanth Jamat - 1900 years ago.

Before the advent of Islam there were countless people scattered all over the world who believed in One Supreme Being to Whom they offered their submission and lived by His Law. Six centuries earlier, the Holy Prophet Issa (Jesus), with the help of the fifty-fifth Pa'tra,¹ Hazrat Shamoon Safa, guided his people, the Jews and others, to follow his teaching of Satpanth. Our Holy Pir Sadraddin has given, in his 'Genealogy: the Vishnapuri', seventy-seven Holy Names of the Pa'tras, the Holders of the Noor of Imamate, before Mowla Ali (footnote No.8). Those who followed that path formed the jamat of Satpanthis at that time. This jamat was known as the Essenes.

Mowlana Hazar Imam had, indirectly, referred to this jamat in his Farman as follows:

* Becca is Mecca

¹- Sanskrit word pa'tra means a container, or holder.



realpatidar.com

"I want you to remember that the only thing that can carry you, if you were to get into crisis here or anywhere, or anything else, the only thing that can carry you through the crisis happily, even though you may have worldly difficulties is ima'n (Faith).

"And this ima'n has carried the jamats through nineteen hundreds years of history. And this is a tradition. This is something which I want you always to remember and to teach to your children and their children."

(Nairobi. 7, Sept, 1963)

As society became more corrupt, life for the Essenes became difficult and they withdrew from society and remained aloof. In the book "Crucifixion" by an Eye-Witness², it is mentioned that: "Jesus had some secret friends, the Essenes, unknown to his disciples and other people." Eye-Witness further states that Jesus and John the Baptist belonged to the Order of Essenes, admitted in their early manhood."³

The Christian biographers of Jesus describe his life from birth to twelve years of age after which there is a long gap of 18 years. He then reappears in the light of history at the age of thirty. However, there is very little known, if anything, about his age from twelve to thirty. What happened to Jesus during these eighteen years? There is evidence from various sources, which makes it clear that the Holy Prophet Issa (Jesus) had spent most of his time among the Essenes.

The Essenes were a well-organised group and very mystically oriented. They "wore simple white garments and did not own a change of clothes. Their conduct was orderly and their conversation restrained... cases of disobedience were almost unknown; neither bribe nor torture could make them false to their sect."⁴

"What most struck the outside observer was the strictness and secrecy of the Order. ...In villages and towns they settled round a central house of their Order. In these monasteries or central houses they followed their observances together. In short the Essenes were members of a strict secret Order, who would not contact non-members; who hated the wicked, who were distinguished by their long white garments and who had their monastic lodges in uninhabited places and central houses in villages and towns. To this Order did Jesus belong, and was, perhaps, one of its leaders."⁵ It has been reported that they were praying three times a day.

"Sabbath observance was very strict; in their society there were four grades, based on learning and seniority. They were devoted to study, prayer, and acts of benevolence, especially towards the aged and sick. They bathed in cold water, ate but a single dish and worked till sundown. They prayed before sunrise and at their meals a priest said grace. To be pious to the Deity, to practice justice towards men; never to injure anyone, either of his own accord or under compulsion; always hate the wicked and side with the just; ever to show faithfulness to all mankind and to be true to those in authority, for all power comes from God; to love truth and hate falsehood; to keep his hands pure of theft and his soul from unrighteous gain."⁶

"It is a peculiar fact that after his alleged resurrection Jesus always greeted people by saying "Peace be unto you" a sign of recognition peculiar to the Essenes."⁷

²- cited: Jesus in Heaven on Earth, p.196

³- Ibid, p.218

⁴- Ibid. p.219

⁵- Ibid. p. 220

⁶- Enc. Britannica. see under ESSENES

⁷- Jesus in Heaven on Earth, p.220



The underlined words should be noted carefully:

Secrecy: about Satpanth,
Central house: like jamatkhana,
Four grades: perhaps like mukhi, kamera, da'i and fida'i,
Authority: the Holy Prophet and his appointed leaders,
Peace be unto you: Salamo alayik or Ya Ali madad.

As explained above the Essenes were the jamat of Satpanth under the guidance of Holy Nabi Yahya (John the Baptist) and Holy Nabi Issa (Jesus). The Holy Pa'tra was Shamoon Safa.⁸ Originally the Essenes came from the Jewish stock but they were not Jews. The Jewish movement of mystics was known as Kabbalah. They were nowhere, spiritually, near the Order of Essenes. No one knows how long the Order existed. They might have changed their identity or changed their ways of activities. No record or evidence, of the size of their population, is found. History of that period is obscure.

Before the advent of Islam, Christianity was the popular faith. Unfortunately, like other communities, there were hierarchical power struggles and corruption in the higher echelons of the Christian community. There were, however, some seekers of Truth and serious thinkers like Suleman el Faras, Warqah bin Nofal, Abdullah bin Jahash, Abu Zar Ghaffari. These seekers of Truth and many others who had spiritual awakening later embraced Islam.⁹

Satpanth, True Path, is Islam and as the Holy Qura'n tells us that all the 124,000 Holy Prophets were Muslims.¹⁰ (A Muslim means the one who surrenders to the Will of Allah). These Prophets taught Islam, that is complete submission to Allah. There has always been a group of serious and sincere people among the followers of every Prophet who formed the 'inner jamat' of that time. The earth has never been without the true believers of God. Satpanth, as some believe, was not started by Holy Pir Satgur Noor; nor was it started by the Holy Prophet Mohammed; nor did by the Holy Prophets Jesus, Moses, David, Abraham, Noah or Adam. The Creator Himself has started it. As the Qur'an affirms:

"Hast thou not seen that Allah, He it is Whom all who
are in the heavens and the earth praise, and the birds in
their flight? Of each He knoweth verily the worship and
the praise; and Allah is Aware of what they do."¹¹

⁸ - A Holy Pa'tra was the holder of the Noor of Imamate, before Mowla Murtuza Ali, the First Imam of this Era. But he, the Pa'tra, was not called "Imam". Holy Prophet Ibrahim was declared as the Imam of the mankind by Allah, who also announced that his progeny would hold the same Noor and position, generation after generation, till the end of this world.(HQ.2:124)

⁹ - Sirat ibn Hishsham; cited, Siratun Nabi-I, p.125

¹⁰ - H.Q. 23:51,52

¹¹ - H.Q. 24:41



HISTORY OF THE SATPANTH JAMAT

JAMAT is an Arabic word meaning: a body of people who believe in the same principles, an assembly, a congregation, a community of people with a common worldview. For our purpose, jamat means the Ismailia community, and Satpanth means Ismaili Tariqah. Our Holy Pir Satgur Noor addressed the assembly of the jamat as 'guth' - a Sanskrit word meaning the place of protection. Today, the word "guth-jamat" is commonly used in the jamats of Indian origin.

Pir Satgur Noor was the first Ismaili Nizari Pir to visit India during the Imamate of our eighteenth Holy Imam Mowlana Mustansir Billah, in 474/1081. He arrived in Gujrat, India, at the time when the Indians had already suffered greatly at the hands of the Muslim invaders. The first Arab raid against Thane, near Bombay (now Mumbai), took place as early as 16/637, during the Caliphate of Hazrat Omar.¹² The Muslims destroyed property and took away wealth and slaves. Another powerful attack on Sind took place in 93/711 by the famous Muslim general Mohammed bin Qasim, during the Imamate of our Holy Imam Mohammed el Ba'qir, ordered by the Omayyad Caliph Al-Walid-I.¹³ Eventually, the Muslim rule was established at Multan, directly under the Caliph.

Our Holy Imam Jaffer es Sadiq had sent two dai's, Musa bin Abdullah Mahz and Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Abdullah Mahz, to India where they had established the Shia faith and converted a large number of the local people to Shia Islam. This was in the second century of Hijra.¹⁴ Subsequently, Ismaili rule was established at Multan. It was later abolished by Sultan Mohammed of Gaur in 1175 A.C.¹⁵

The jamat divided after the death of the Holy Imam Jaffer es Sadiq. The majority followed Musa Kazim, the third son of the Holy Imam, because of the unknown whereabouts of our Holy Imam Mowlana Ismail who, earlier, had been sent to Syria by his father. Later, when the truth was revealed the faithful declared their allegiance to the rightful Imam Mowlana Ismail.

Within a few decades the Ismailis established their rule in Sind which was destroyed by Mahmoud of Ghazna, sometime between 1026 and 1030. W. Ivanow writes: "...when the Ghaznawid rule rapidly degenerated, the Ismaili leaders, who obviously were thus not completely exterminated, again seized authority and quietly ruled the the province for more than a hundred years till the final conquest of Sind by the Gurides in 571/1175, when a Turkish slave, Na'siruddin Qubacha, was appointed governor."¹⁶ The Ismaili jamat, as Shia jamat, had flourished in Sind ever since, though there were great ups and downs.

After the advent of Islam the Muslim rulers, from Arabia and Afghanistan, had raided India mostly to destroy their temples, personal property and life. This unIslamic attitude had created a deep hatred for the Muslims and Islam in the minds of the Indians. In such circumstances our Holy Pir Satgur Noor had, wisely and discreetly, introduced the Ismaili Nizari Tariqah as a 'gupti' movement. It was a great success. This was the beginning of the jamat of Satpanth Islam in India. The people of India were taught that Islam was actually an extension of the ancient Sanatan Dharma: Vishnu was Ali, Brahma was Mohammed, Mahaisha was Adam Safiyullah, the Ather Veda was the Holy Qura'n etc. The assembly of the jamat was named as "guth" meaning: the place of protection. Of course, there was jamat in Syria, Egypt and other North African countries at that time.

The Holy Prophet said: "Verily, Allah is with the jamat." We know and believe that the guth-jamat is the 'Court of God ' where His Noor is present in all its Glory. Islam has laid special emphasis on prayer in congregation. The assembly of

¹²- An Advanced History of India, p. 1047

¹³- Ibid p.1048

¹⁴- A Brief History of Ismailism, p.160.

¹⁵- An Advanced History of India, p.277.

¹⁶- Collectanea, vol-I, p.8.



worshippers, who praise the Almighty and submit their petition to Him, is a body showering the Mercy of Allah on the worshippers. Our Holy Pir Hasan Kabirdin has written in his 'Anant Akhado' that if a person has a good deed worth a sesame seed against his sins, the size of an elephant, and if the guth-jamat prays for his forgiveness the Merciful God will accept it.¹⁷

The jamat is a spiritual edifice of unity and each member is a brick. All thoughts of the worshippers converge at one point: the prayer. This unity reflects the Unity of Allah, --Tawheed. Jamat is like a fist, strong and solid, while each finger is weak and easily subdued. Our Holy Imam Mowlana Sultan Mohammed Shah said: "Jamat is like my physical body in which the Noor of Ali dwells. Whenever there is a trouble in jamat We get physical pain."¹⁸

In our Tariqah it is very important, and essential, to remain with the jamat by attending jamatkhana for prayers. In our Tariqah the jamat and the jamatkhana are intertwined with each other.

JAMAT IN ARABIA

As soon as our Holy Prophet arrived near Medina after the Hijrat (migration), he built a mosque at Quba, a suburb of Medina, at a distance of three miles. He also took part in the labour work for the mosque. He stayed there for fourteen days waiting for the arrival of Mowla Ali from Mecca. The Holy Prophet was the guest of Amr bin Auf, the Chief of his tribe. This was the first mosque built after the advent of Islam.¹⁹ When he came to Medina he built the Central Mosque, known as Masjid-e-Nabvi. Later, eight more mosques were built in different localities of Medina. The Holy Prophet's stay in Medina for ten years strengthened Islam tremendously. The faith of Islam spread far and wide. Hundreds of thousands of people of all ranks embraced Islam.

A few serious thinkers had asked the Holy Prophet if there was anything more than the regular prayers and fasting in the month of Ramadan. The Prophet instructed them to meditate in the later part of the night, in remembrance of Allah.

Allah mentions:

"Thy Lord knows that thou keepest vigil nearly two-thirds of the night, or a half of it, or a third of it, and a party of those with thee; and God determines the night and the day." (H.Q. 73:20).

The underlined words of God indicate that there was a special 'jamat' in the general Umma. There were a few people who were serious about their spiritual enhancement and Hereafter. There were hundreds of thousands of Muslims who had accepted Islam but did not understand its beauty. Allah has stated:

"The wandering Arabs say: We believe. Say (unto them O Muhammad): Ye believe not, but rather say "We submit," for the faith has not yet entered into your hearts. Yet, if ye obey Allah and His messenger, He will not withhold from you aught of (the reward of) your deeds. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (H.Q. 49:14)

The 'jamat' practised 'Baitul Khayal'. They were "the mystical chihil tan (forty bodies), symbols of Sufic fraternity".²⁰ The

¹⁷- Anant Akhado, v.115.

¹⁸- Kalame' Imame' Mobin, vol-I p.113.

¹⁹- Siratun Nabi vol-I, p.275;
also the Religion of Islam, p.389

²⁰. Collectanea, vol-I, p.37.



Holy Prophet had appointed, in this 'jamat' of forty, Abdullah (Ibn Masoud) as the mukhi and Musa as kamera.²¹ Later, Qamber was mukhi and Suleman el-Faras was the kamera.²² That was the jamat of Satpanthis.

Sayyid Nurmohammed bin Sayyid Imam Shah did not mean that these Hindi words 'mukhi' and 'kamera' were used in those days but he gave an information in Hindi terminology. It was perhaps 'shaykh' and 'na'ib' in Arabic, like a convenor and his assistant.

After the death of the Holy Prophet, the Shia of Ali, including Beni Hasham, turned to Mowla Ali for spiritual and temporal guidance. For such matters they would meet at a private place rather than in the mosque. The jamat was very small in size and poor and yet the momineen never hesitated to serve their Imam. Many sacrificed their lives in the battles such as the Battle of Camel, the Battle of Siffin, the Battle of Nahrwa'n and others. During the Imamate of Mowlana Imam Husain, the situation became worse for the *Ahl-Bait* and the jamat. Seventy-two lives were sacrificed for the sake of their beloved Imam in the battle of Kerbala. The army of Caliph Yezid killed Mowlana Imam Husain and many of his family members, including infants.

After the assassination of Mowla Ali, the persecution of Shias had forced them to observe *taqiyya*, to hide the truth, dissimulation. The eighth Omayyad Caliph Omer bin Abdulaziz had stopped their persecution, which gave them some respite.²³ Omayyad Caliph Walid killed Imam Zainul A'bedin, Caliph Hishsham killed Imam Mohemmed al-Baqir and Abbasid Caliph Mansoor killed Imam Ja'ffer es-Sadiq. Mowlana Imam Ismail had escaped to Syria during the Imamate of his father.

The jamat had grown considerably during the Imamate of our Holy Imam Ja'ffer es Sadiq. At that time there were eight thousand momineen of the Batini Jamat in Medina alone.²⁴

The Omayyad caliphate had been obliterated by the Abbasids who were no less hostile towards the Holy Ahl-Bait of the Holy Prophet, the Fatimids. At the end of the Omayyad dynasty Abul Abbas es-Saffah took over as the first Abbasid Caliph in 132/749.²⁵ Caliph As-Saffah died after four years in 136 A.H and handed over the Throne to his brother Mansoor who killed the Holy Imam Jafar es-Sadiq by poisoning in 148/765.²⁶

JAMAT IN TAJIKISTAN

Sayyid Imam Shah, son of Holy Pir Hasan Kabirdin, has mentioned about the Pamiris who came from Arabia after the assassination of Mowla Ali. He narrates: "When Sayyida Bibi Fatima became of age the Holy Prophet, on the Divine instruction, arranged her marriage with Ali and gave her a meagre dowry but it included four slave boys who were eunuch by birth.

They served the household of Ali devotedly. After sometime Sayyida Fatima, greatly pleased with their service, asked Mowla Ali to free them and bless them and their future generations. The Holy Mother, also, blessed them and their generations and advised them to remain loyal and obedient to Ali. They embraced Islam and were given Islamic names as Sa'diq, Abdulkha'leq, Abdullah and Abdurasul. They wondered how they could multiply since they were eunuchs? They were sent to the Holy Prophet for blessing. The Holy Prophet explained to them about Hazrat Ali's status and told them whenever a child was born among their families, the baby should be wrapped and left rolling down from the top of a hill in the name of Ali. The lover of Ali would survive otherwise the baby would die. Sayyid Imam Shah had mentioned that this practice was still

²¹. Satveni Ni Vail, ch.5:2,3.

²². Ibid. ch.21:5,6

²³. A Brief History of Ismailism, p.29

²⁴. Satveni Ni Vail, ch.43:8

²⁵. Ibid, p.37

²⁶. Ibid, p.41



prevalent since the beginning.²⁷

It seems that the four Mowlais might have left Arabia when Mowla Ali shifted his capital from Medina to Kufa in Iraq. The persecution of the Shias might have forced them to move to Iran and then to the Pamir valley, east of Shughnan which is now in Tajikistan. There is evidence that our Holy Imams Mowlana Zainul Abedin and Mowlana Mohammed el-Baqir had visited that area. Pir Nasir Khusrao converted the Shughnis to Ismaili Islam, possibly from Buddhism.

In 1923 the Holy Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had sent Pir Subzali with a *Taliqa*, to the jamats of Central Asia. He, too, had mentioned the foregoing tradition of the Pamiri Mowlais. The author also travelled to that area in 1994. The tradition was confirmed by the Pamiris, however, it is no more in practice. It was, perhaps, abolished during the Soviet rule or even earlier.

JAMAT IN SYRIA

The Abbasid Caliph Mansoor (754-775 A.D.) tried his utmost, in vain, to kill our Holy Imam Ismail, who was proclaimed as the successor to his father. Mowlana Imam Ismail had already slipped to Syria secretly. Only a few trusted dai's knew it. After the death, in Medina, of our fifth Holy Imam Ja'ffer es Sadiq, the Shias divided into two streams, the Ismailis and the Seveners. According to Shia tradition Hazrat Hasan bin Ali was the second Imam and Hazrat Husain became the third. In this way Imam Ja'ffer es Sadiq was the sixth and Hazrat Musa Kazim was their seventh Imam. His followers were known as the Seveners. Some western historians have erroneously mentioned Ismailis as the Seveners.

Because Imam Ismail was not present at the time of his father's death and because the people did not know his whereabouts, the leaders of the Shias proclaimed Hazrat Musa Kazim, as their Imam. A section of the community did not accept that. They argued that the Holy Imam had proclaimed Ismail as his successor and the Imam was never wrong. Though small in number, this was the actual jamat that had been practising the Batini Tariqah in '*taqiyya*'. They came to be known as the Ismailis. Ismaili Tariqah spread quickly in Lebanon and Syria. In Syria, too, our Holy Imams and the jamat did not enjoy absolute peace but they had continued the propagation of the Holy Faith. During this Syrian period of Ismaili history, an Ismaili Dai Abu Abdullah al-Shii was sent to Morocco in 280/893. In fifteen years he converted all the Berber tribes to Ismailism and prepared the ground for the first Ismaili Empire.

There is a large jamat in Syria. Most of our Ismailis are engaged in agriculture and petty trade.

JAMAT IN NORTH AFRICA

In 296/908 our Holy Imam al-Mehdi was proclaimed as the first Fatimid Caliph in Morocco, North Africa. There were more than two million Ismailis before the arrival of the Holy Imam, of which forty thousands were practising Baitul Khayal system.²⁸ As the Fatimid empire extended to the east, to Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sicily, southern Italy and southern Spain, the jamat also spread to all these places.²⁹ After the conquest of Egypt, in 359/969 by our great hero Ghazi Jawhar, the Fatimid glory spread all over, from Morocco in the west to Mecca in the east. With it the Tariqah had also spread far and wide. In the time of our Holy Imam Mustansir Billah-I there were a hundred thousand momineen in the Batini fold.³⁰

During the Fatimid Caliphate the Ismailis and others had absolute freedom of faith. Fatimid Ismaili rulers never tried to convert anybody to Ismaili Tariqah by force or through incentives. The followers strictly observed the Ismaili Batini Tariqah but the *Mijalas al-Hikmah* were reserved for the learned. Generally the Ismailis attended the common mosques but they had

²⁷- Momanchitvani, v. 120-160

²⁸. Satveni Ni Vail, ch.54:9

²⁹. A Brief History of Ismailism, p.54.

³⁰. Satveni Ni Vail, ch.57:3



their special places for private congregations. The jamat flourished economically, socially and spiritually. During these two centuries of our glorious period in North Africa the Ismaili jamat and its literature on religion, philosophy, humanism and many branches of science and arts attained full development.

When Mowlana Imam Mustansir Billah died, Mowlana Imam Nizar was out of Cairo. The Prime Minister Afzal installed his own son-in-law, Musta'li, a younger son of the Holy Imam, as the Imam and Caliph. Musta'li imprisoned his brother on his return to Cairo. This split gave the birth to Musta'lians who later became known as Bohoras. Musta'li died at the age of twenty-six leaving behind a five-year old son, Aamer.. He died at the age of thirty-four leaving behind a pregnant wife who later gave birth to a girl. Hence, the line of Musta'li ended.

Hostility and persecution created difficulties for the Nizari Ismaili jamat in Egypt. Many had moved to the newly established Ismaili State of Alamut, which had lasted for almost 170 years. Much of our literary work and libraries were lost to the Musta'lians in Egypt but in Alamut, once again, our scholars and erudite started to recoup the lost knowledge in a new style known as the *Da'wate' Jadeed*.

At the same time that history was unfolding in Alamut, our Holy Pir Satgur Noor had started the Satpanth movement in India and composed Ginans known as the Wonderful Tradition. Unfortunately, during the destruction of Alamut by Mongol invaders, we lost most of our literary treasure. However, some of the sacred Ginanic literature, in India, has survived which is still in our possession.

JAMAT IN IRAN

The decline of the Fatimids and the Nizari-Mustalien split led to the transfer of Ismaili headquarters from Egypt to the fortress of Alamut in the mountain range of Elburz in northwest of Tehran. Pockets of Ismaili settlement were already flourishing in Iran where our great hero Hasan bin Sabbah had established an Ismaili State in 483/1090. Our Holy Imam Hadi arrived in Alamut in 490/1096.

As the political influence had been extended far and wide, the jamat also spread, particularly in the areas of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Khurasan, Azerbaijan, Kuhistan and other outlying areas. After the destruction of Alamut by the Mongols in 654/1256, our jamat and the Darkhana of the Holy Imam moved to Azerbaijan. During the next six centuries, the Imamate remained in Iran. Over seven and a half centuries of presence of Imamate in Iran had tremendous impact on the life of the Ismailis and the jamat as a whole. Hundreds of jamatkhanas were established throughout Iran. From Azerbaijan the Darkhana moved to Shahr Babak, to Anjudan, to Kahak and to Kerman. The rise of the Safavid dynasty to power made the conditions more favourable for our Imams to re-assert their hold on outlying areas. For centuries countless Ismailis, from India, had been travelling to Iran for the Holy Dida'r. Hundreds of thousands of Ismailis are living in Iran today. Most of them are engaged in agriculture and shopkeeping.

In Syria, the Ismailis continued to exist in spite of the persecution by the Mamluks. They restored the town of Salemiya around the 19th century. The Ismailis of Badakshan and the surrounding areas remained unaffected by the Mongol invasion.

The activities of our Holy Imams and the jamat varied from time to time according to the political situation. Shortly before the birth of the Alamut State, the Nizari Ismaili Dawa' had spread successfully in the Indian subcontinent. Once again the Imamate moved, this time to India, in 1258/1842.



realpatidar.com
JAMAT IN INDIA

Our Holy Imam Mowlana Mustansir Billah-I had sent Pir Satgur Noor to India in 462/1070 who converted thousands of natives to Ismaili Satpanth Islam. He converted Rajah Jaysingh Siddhraj, the Rajah of Pa'tan, in Gujrat, and appointed him as the first mukhi. The meeting place of these *gupties*, for religious purpose, was called *dharamsala* or '*guth*', later known as jamatkhana. In Navsari the Pir had appointed Cha'nch as the mukhi who misappropriated the funds of the jamat and was excommunicated.³¹

For the first time the word '*jamatkhana*' was introduced by our Holy Pir Shams (d.757/1356). In his *Mansamjhani* (p.259-v.4) the Pir mentions that he had established eighty-four jamatkhans in Tibet and China in addition to those established in India. Since that time we call our prayer house as jamatkhana, the prayer hall is called '*guth*' and the congregation is called '*guthjamat*'.

The jamat in India has been in existence for almost a thousand years. During this period it spread from Peshawer to Rangoon and Srinagar to Columbo. Ismailis of Sind are the oldest. Then come the Gujratis converted by Pir Satgur Noor (d.487/1094). Shamsi Guptis were converted by Pir Shams. The Khoja Ismailis were converted by Pir Sadruddin (d. 819/1416) mostly in Cutchh, Sind and Kathiawar. Pir Hasan Kabirdin (d.871/1466) worked in Bahawalpur, Uchch, Sind, Baluchistan and Marwar. Pir Tajdin (d.876/ 1471), known as Shah Turail, converted the peasants of Sidhpur and Methan areas in Gujrat and gave them the title of *Momanas*. Our Holy Imam Aga Ali Shah had said that he considered the Momanas as his relatives.

In 1258/1842 our Holy Imam Aga Hasanali Shah, the forty-sixth Ismaili Imam, came to India from Iran with his son, the forty-sixth Holy Pir Aga Ali Shah accompanied by a large family of relatives, and their servants. They resided in India for the rest of their lives. The jamats of India were greatly honoured and blessed by the Shah and the Pir. There were hundreds of jamatkhans in the *Jampoodeep* (India) functioning quite well. There were over a half million Ismailis, including a hundred thousand *Gupties*, descendants of those who were converted to the Satpanth by our Holy Pirs Satgur Noor and Shams. Shah is the holder of the Noor of Imamat and the Pir is the holder of the Noor of Nabooowat but not a Nabi..*Vahi*, revelation, stopped at the demise of Holy Prophet Mohammed.

In 1799 a severe famine occurred in the large part of Western India including Gujrat, Kathiawar, Cutchh, Sind, Punjab, Marwar and others. That horrible event killed a large number of population through hunger and disease. Hundreds of young Ismailis, from Cutchh, Kathiawar, Gujrat and mostly from Sind had migrated to Gwadar, Pasni, Ormara and Muscut. Most of them succeeded in prosperity. Holy Pir Sarkar Mata Salaamt had visited Gwadar, in 1829, and blessed the jamat.

Most of the Ismailis in India were extremely poor particularly in Kathiawar and Cutchh. They were working as labourers, servants and coolies. In the State of Junagadh the Khojas were often ridiculed as porters and grave diggers. There were, of course, a few traders and shopkeepers but mostly they were in a wretched condition. Once the Holy Shah Pir saw a group of Ismaili women collecting cow dung for cooking purpose. (The dung was turned into two inch thick and seven to nine inches diameter round flat discs. These were dried in the sun and stored to be used as fuel. They had no money to buy wood or charcoal). Tears flowed down from the eyes of the Holy Imam and the Holy Pir at the scene.

With the blessings of the Holy Imam, the jamat of India gradually made progress. In 1870 a group of forty Ismailis from Cutchh and Sorashtre had emigrated to Zanzibar with the blessings of the Holy Imam. Within thirty-five years, from 1845-80, the jamats all over India had made great progress in every respect. The Holy Imam Hasanali Shah had declared the jamatkhana at Khadak, Bombay, as his Darkhana, which is still the Darkhana of the world.

In the jamats of Kera in Cutchh and Mahuwa in Kathiawar a few disgruntled individuals had created some problem in the

³¹- Life of Pir Satgur Noor, (unpublished)



realpatidar.com
jamat. They claimed that Pir Sadruddin was a Sunni Muslim who converted them to Sunni Islam. Needless to say, these individuals were legally excommunicated.³² In this respect read the Judgement of the Aga Khan Case on 12 November, 1866, in the High Court of Bombay. Mowlana Hassanali Shah died on the 12 April, 1881 in Bombay.

He was succeeded by his son Pir Aga Ali Shah. His four years Imamate, short though, was very significant. He was a member of the Royal Imperial Council. His influence in British Raj helped solve many problems of the Muslims. After the Mutiny in 1857, by the Indian regiments, mostly by Muslim soldiers, brought invisible punishment to the Muslims in India. Because the British had snatched power from the Moghals, the Muslims were considered as the 'enemy' and after the Mutiny they were denied any help such as employment, education, property allotment etc. The Hindus had preference over the Muslims. In these circumstances the personality and the influence of the Holy Imam Aga Ali Shah benefited the Muslims in the Bombay Presidency. He died on the 17th of August, 1885. He was buried in Kerbala, Iraq.

In 1885 Mowlana Imam Aga Sultan Mohammed Shah graced the Throne of Imamate at the age of eight. Seventy-two years of his Imamate was a glorious period in the history of Ismailis. This period is characterized by accelerating cultural advancement, modernisation and advancement of science. The entire jamat made tremendous progress in all walks of life. A hitherto unknown community had become a well-known sect of Islam known all over the world. The Holy Imam's personality was greatly responsible for all development and progress of the jamat. The Golden Jubilees and the Diamond Jubilees proved to be immensely beneficial to the jamat as a whole both economically as well as socially.

The Holy Imam organised the jamat in India religiously as well as socially. He established, in 1894, certain mijalas (sing. majlis) to improve religious understanding through preaching and to increase the attendance. First time in the history of the jamat the Holy Imam established a Council at Bombay, in 1901, for the betterment of the jamat socially, economically and educationally.

On the completion of fifty years of Mowlana Sultan Mohammed Shah's Imamate (August 1935), the jamat in India celebrated the Golden Jubilee. On the 19th of January 1936 he was weighed against solid gold at Hasanabad in Bombay (now Mumbai). It was a unique occasion. The following year, on the 1st of March 1937, the weighing-in ceremony was repeated in Nairobi, Kenya. The value of the gold, acquired in India, was utilised for education and in East Africa for the creation of the Jubilee Insurance Company to help the jamat economically. Similar celebrations had taken place on the occasions of the Diamond Jubilees in Bombay, India, on the 10th of March 1946 and in Dar es Salaam, Africa, on the 10th of August 1946. The Holy Imam was weighed in diamonds. This time the huge sum of money was used to create Housing Societies for the purpose of providing affordable houses to those who had no accommodation of their own. The Platinum Jubilees had taken place in Pakistan at Karachi on the 20th of January 1954 and in Africa at Cairo on the 20th of February 1955. These were the symbolic ceremonies; there was no weighing-in against platinum because of the physical ill health of the Holy Imam.

During the longest Imamate of Mowlana Aga Sultan Mohammed Shah the religious activities and spiritual awareness were greatly increased, side by side, with the material improvements of the jamat worldwide. A total balance, between *zahir* (exoteric) and *batin* (esoteric), of life was very prominent in his teachings as was spiritual advancement through self-discipline to go hand in hand with material progress through responsible actions. In this period literary work was undertaken. Scores of magazines, in English, Gujarati and Urdu appeared. Hundreds of books were published about the tenets of our faith and its history. Missionary activities were enhanced. Many schools, libraries, hospitals, dispensaries and sports facilities were built at various centres. The Cooperative Societies, the Financial Trusts, the Housing Societies and many Commercial Corporations were created for the benefit of the jamat all over.

In the past, our religious literature and the work of our Pirs and their progeny, in India, were hidden in manuscripts in Khojki script and therefore were not readily accessible in local dialects. Today, however, translations are available facilitated by

³²- Nurum Mobin (Urdu), p.618.



modern printing equipment. A devoted Ismaili, Mukhi Lalji Devraj of Bombay, who went to Germany sometime in the late 1890's, brought a complete printing press to India, and started publication of the sacred treasure, the Ginans. He established the Khoja Sindhi Printing Press at Bhimpura, Bombay and thus began the process of translating and printing of precious manuscripts.

Mowlana Aga Sultan Mohammed Shah died on Thursday the 11th of July 1957 in Geneva, Switzerland. He was succeeded, according to his Will, by his grandson Prince Karim as our forty-ninth Holy Imam and Holy Pir:

"I appoint my grandson Karim, the son of my son
Aly Salomone Khan, to succeed to the title of
Aga Khan and to be the Imam and Pir of all my
Shia Ismailian followers."

Mowlana Hazar Imam Shah Karim has dedicated his life for the spiritual and material progress of the jamat worldwide and we are observing the fruits of his guidance and personal activities. We are indeed extremely grateful to our beloved Holy Hazar Imam.

The population of the jamat in India has dwindled after the partition of India in 1947. A large number of Indian Ismailis immigrated to many other countries such as Pakistan, Europe, Canada, United States, Congo and other areas..

JAMAT IN AFRICA

While North Africa is mostly Arab dominated, the land situated south of the Sahara is known as Black Africa. Until the end of the eighteenth century, except the east littoral, the Dark Continent was greatly primitive. Islam had penetrated in most of the areas up to Mozambique within a century of its advent.

For centuries Indians were trading with Mombasa, Zanzibar, Kilwa, Beira and many other ports of east Africa. In 1498 Portuguese Vasco da Gama, hired a Gujrati pilot in Zanzibar to sail to India where he landed at Calicut.³³ This is a clear indication that the Indians were living in east Africa prior to that. Kilwa was the premier port of the east Coast of Africa in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Little information is available about the beginning of Ismaili settlement in East Africa. We do know, however, that there was an Ismaili jamat in Muscat in the early nineteenth century. Our Holy Pir Sarkar Mata Salaamat had visited the Muscat jamat in 1829. In 1832 the Sultan of Muscat Sayyid Said, who had already established his rule in Zanzibar and Mombasa, had left Muscat for Zanzibar permanently. Many of his subjects, perhaps some Ismailis too, left Muscat to settle in bustling Zanzibar.³⁴

In 1857 Sir Richard Burton and Captain Speke had visited Tabora in Tanganyika and stayed with an Ismaili, Musa Mzuri, who was an influential merchant for many years.³⁵ One can assume therefore, that there was an Ismaili presence in Tanganyika before 1857.

In 1870, a group of forty Ismailis from Cutchh arrived in Bombay en route to east Africa in obedience to their Holy Imam Mowlana Shah Hasanali Shah, who had earlier encouraged youngsters to immigrate to Africa. They were fortunate to get an audience for blessings of the Imam. The Holy Imam blessed them and ordered them to convey to the mukhi-kamera to perform the four tasbeehs, prescribed for the entire jamat in Africa, everyday after the evening prayer. In 1905, our Holy Imam

³³- Zanzibar, by Major F.B. Pearce (1920), p.59

³⁴- Ibid. p.116

³⁵-From my memory. I have read it but cannot find the book for reference. realpatidar.com



Mowlana Sultan Mohammed Shah had changed the time of the tasbeehs from evening to morning, after prayer.³⁶

After the Golden Jubilee, in March 1937, at Nairobi the Ismaili population in Africa started increasing. By the time of the Diamond Jubilee at Dar es Salaam, in August 1946, there were some 75,000 Ismailis in Africa: in Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, Zanzibar, Sudan, Jibuti, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, South Africa, Mozambique including Madagascar, Comoro and Mauritius.

Today, many Ismailis are living in many cities and towns in Nigeria, Ghana, Sirre Leon, Egypt, Ivory Coast and other places.

JAMAT IN EUROPE

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Ismailis began settling in Europe. Our Holy Imam Mowlana Aga Sultan Mohammed Shah had visited London in February, 1898 and decided to reside in England. An Ismaili family, known as Naginawala, from Surat (Gujrat), had settled in Paris in the early 1920s. In the same period the famous Jhaveri family, also from Surat and Bombay, had settled in Antwerpen, Belgium. After World War-II (1939-45) many young Ismailis from Africa and India went to Europe, particularly to Great Britain, for further studies. In the fifth decade of the last century the students in London had formed the first jamat. The Holy Imam established the first Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana in 1954 in London at 5, Palace Gate, Kensington.

The political and social discrimination and economic restrictions in some of the newly independent countries in East Africa, had compelled thousands of Asians, including Ismailis, to move to the western countries. More than ten thousand Ismailis had settled in U.K., Europe and Russia by 1980.

Eventually, an architecturally imposing Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana was built in London, in April, 1985. Another prestigious Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana opened in Lisbon on the Imamate Day, 11th of July, 1998.

JAMAT IN NORTH AMERICA

Political and social discrimination against Asians living in Africa led to their mass expulsion from Uganda and voluntary emigration from Tanzania. The Ugandan Asians fled as refugees, penniless and homeless.

With great foresight, our Hazar Imam immediately arranged for the expelled jamats to settle in the North American Continent, particularly in Canada. The jamats of North America are immensely grateful to their Holy Imam and his uncle, our beloved Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the High Commissioner for the Refugees in the United Nations, for the arrangements of transferring thousands of Ismailis smoothly. Alhamdulillah, today, there are almost a hundred thousands Ismailis in North America. It is the first time in our history that the jamats have been established in the developed countries in the West. There are more than a hundred and fifty jamatkhanas in Canada and the United States. An elegant building of the Ismaili Centre and Jamatkhana was opened on 24th of August 1985, in Burnaby, B.C. Canada has the most beautiful and elegant jamatkhanas in the world.

A high profile jamatkhana is under construction in Houston, U.S.A. Another will come up in Toronto in the near future.

JAMAT IN OTHER COUNTRIES

³⁶-Abualy's Series No.6, published in 1990



Besides the jamats in the countries mentioned above, there are jamats in Afghanistan, Australia, Aden, Bahrain, Brazil, Burma, China, Chitral, Dubai, Hong Kong, Japan, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Malaysia (including Singapore), Mongolia, Muscat, New Zealand, Pakistan (including Gwadar, Hunza, Gilgit), Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka and Sharjah. Tajik-Pamiris, known as the Badakhshanis, are, perhaps, the oldest Ismailis who are Shia Imami murids since the time of Mowla Murtaza Ali.

There may be hundreds of places in the world where Ismailis are living individually or in a single family. Once, a Christian priest who had lived in western India for many years and who knew Khoja Ismailis, asked the Holy Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah about the places where his followers were living. The Holy Imam replied: "Except in the Hell they are living everywhere." Indeed.

The Ismailis have spread far and wide. Today, they are living in more than forty countries of the world. It is not possible to get an enumeration of Ismailis living in so many countries but an estimate of more than twenty millions is not unrealistic. Our Holy Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had mentioned that "a large number of Mohammedan faith to-day -- numbering about twenty millions -- acknowledge me as their head. They pay me tribute, and worship me, who have the blood of their Prophet in my veins."³⁷

Morning and evening the Ismailis gather together in jamatkhanas for the congregational prayer, or alone wherever they may be. Those members who aspire for *batuni deedar* rise in the last quarter of the night and spend one to two hours for the spiritual progress and understanding.

Viva la Satpanth Islam.

HISTORY OF JAMATKHANA

"His Light is found in Houses which Allah has sanctioned to be built for the remembrance of His name. In them morning and evening His praise is sung by men whom neither trade nor profit can divert from remembering Him, from offering prayers, or from giving alms..."

Holy Qur'an.24:36,37

Jamatkhana is a Persian word meaning: a meeting place of the jamat or community for prayer and meditation. A masjid (mosque) is a place of prostration where the worshippers gather together for prayer. Various religious places are called differently according to their tradition:

Christians call- Church,
Jews - Synagogue,
Muslims - Mosque, masjid,
Hindus - Mandir, deval, temple,
Sikhs - Gurdwara,
Parsees - Agyari.
etc.

The word 'jamatkhana' was coined by our Holy Pir Shamsuddin Sabzvari in India. He mentions, in his Mansamjhani, about his visit to Tibet and China where he had established eighty-four jamatkhanas and appointed mukhis. He had also travelled to Afghanistan, Burma, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Kashmir, Malaya, Russia, Turkey etc. He had visited twenty-four

³⁷-From the article I BELONG TO NO COUNTRY, published in 'JOHN London in 1934; cited: in page eleven in the booklet MESSAGE, Bombay.



countries,³⁸ as a part of his mission, and established jamatkhana at most of those places.

As mentioned earlier, a jamatkhana is the meeting place of the jamat, or community, for prayers and remembrance of God. In Islam generally, a mosque or masjid is a meeting place of the worshippers. The prayer hall in a mosque or jamatkhana building is exclusively used for religious purpose, whereas the other parts may be used for other communal needs. In the general term, a place of worship is called a masjid or a jamatkhana, and is considered as a House of God because of its association with the Divine.

The difference between a jamatkhana and a mosque is that a jamatkhana is the property of the Imam of the Time. He is the sole proprietor of all the jamatkhana in the world, physically as well as spiritually. A mosque is built by donors who take care of it. It is known as a House of Allah but it is usually named after a person such as the mosque of Omru Aas, the mosque of Sahaba, the Osmaniya Mosque, and the Badshahi Masjid etc. A jamatkhana is a jamatkhana; no personal name is attached to it. It is a House of Allah in which the Noor of Imamate is present all the time.

The reason why we Ismailis call our mosque a jamatkhana (even the Arab Ismailis call it jamatkhana) is obvious. It is a Persian word and was coined during the Persian period of our history.

The Ismaili Faith is Tariqah. In Islam, there are four levels of religious understanding:

- 1-Shariat (exoteric, external, zahir),
- 2-Tariqat (esoteric, inner, secret, ba'tin),
- 3-Haqiqat (ultimate reality, truth, essence),
- 4-Ma'rifat (gnosis, understanding, knowledge).

Generally, Muslims follow the Shariat that is prayer, fasting in the month of Ramazan, zakat and hajj. Some thinkers and seekers of higher knowledge follow a few Tariqah methods, for instance: spending more time in the remembrance of Allah (zikr), meditating, detachment from lust and carnal pleasures, sacrificing wealth in the way of God. Some go further and learn mysticism from a Shaykh. Our Ismaili Tariqah, since the time of the Holy Prophet, has been guided by the Holy Imams, the Holy Ahl-Bait. Unlike other Sufi Tariqahs who assemble for their Tariqah practice, not in a mosque, but at a secluded place; we have our jamatkhana for that purpose.

The achievement of success, in the levels of Haqiqat and Ma'rifat, depends upon the disciple's absolute obedience to the Holy Imam, perseverance and striving. Haqiqat is the understanding of the Reality. Ma'rifat is the spiritual experience of the Noor (Light).

"Allah guideth unto His Light whom He Will".
Holy Qura'n.24:35

After the death of our Holy Prophet, the Muslims started to disintegrate and divided into various factions and sections thus losing the real spirit of Islam of the Prophet's time. Anas bin Ma'lik, a famous companion of the Holy Prophet, had reported: "Darkness prevailed over everything after the death of the Prophet. We had not yet finished his burial and we found our hearts were strangers to each other."³⁹ After the death of the Holy Prophet the conspiracies of the enemy within had forced the true momineen, the Shias of Ali, to hide their faith to avoid confrontation.

THE USE OF MOSQUE

The use of the mosque as a sacred place was degraded when Caliph Muawiya used the mosque for his personal grandeur. He

³⁸- Gulzare' Shams, p.316

³⁹. Ismaili Tariqah, part-I, p.12



ordered that after prayer, the congregation should curse and abuse Mowla Ali from the pulpit and this should be done throughout his kingdom.⁴⁰

The mosque, during the Prophet's time, was used for many purposes. One of which was a cultural Centre. The Holy Prophet also held meetings of his Advisory Council, received deputations and delegates from other tribes and various kings;⁴¹ allowed, and personally watched, a display of dance with shield and lance by certain Abyssinians,⁴² in the mosque's courtyard in Medina. Court proceedings were held in the mosque.⁴³ Saad bin Maadh was treated for his wounds and hospitalized in the yard of the mosque, after he was fatally wounded in the battle of Ditch. Later he died there.⁴⁴

Of course all such usages or functions were held outside the prayer hall. The prayer hall was considered to be sacred. The use of a mosque, even the compound, for any personal or business purpose was totally forbidden.⁴⁵ The Holy Prophet ordered: "Respect your mosques and do not raise loud voices in talking."⁴⁶ "To keep a mosque clean and tidy is an act of high merit."⁴⁷ There are voluntary groups known as Safai Committees in our jamat who look after the cleanliness of jamatkhana.

The Ismailis have kept up these traditions and used the Persian word 'jamatkhana' for Arabic 'masjid', to distinguish between the two. There was no minaret of the mosque during the time of the Holy Prophet. The custom of building mosques, with dome and having one or more minarets actually developed during the time of the Omayyad Caliphate. Our jamatkhana have neither domes nor minarets.

During the Holy Prophet's time, Muslim women freely took part in all religious services, and they even attended the morning Prayer.⁴⁸ Mothers brought even their babies with them to the mosque. All this has been explained to make the reader understand the position of our jamatkhana from the Islamic point of view.

Our TRADITION is that every Ismaili must attend jamatkhana, morning and evening, for prayer, for thanking God and for his own spiritual benefit, at least once daily.⁴⁹ A great importance is attached to the regular attendance for prayer in jamatkhana; it is an obligation, a duty. Those who do not attend jamatkhana can hardly keep up the habit of praying regularly and punctually. They would drift away from the faith, gradually.⁵⁰ Hazrat Pir Shams said that those who did not attend jamatkhana regularly would turn devils.⁵¹ Daily attendance of jamatkhana, for prayer, is the first foundation of Faith.⁵²

The Holy Prophet said, "He who performs wudzu and leaves his house for mosque to pray, gets the benefit of a person who performs a hajj."⁵³ He said: "The sawaab of a prayer, performed with the jamat, is twenty-seven folds than if it is said alone".⁵⁴ Sawaab means spiritual benefit.

It is necessary and important to go to jamatkhana daily for ibadat (worship); and go there with devotion and in clean and pure state of mind, body and dress.⁵⁵ The habit of sleeping or feeling drowsy in jamatkhana, during the religious activities, is

⁴⁰. A Brief History of Ismailism, p.28

⁴¹. The Religion of Islam, p.384

⁴². Bukhari, ch.8 No.69

⁴³. Ibid. ch.8 No.44 and ch.93 No.18.

⁴⁴. Ibid. ch.8 No.77

⁴⁵. Abu Da'ood. ch.2 N.213

⁴⁶. Bukhari ch.8 No. 83. Also:Kalam e Imam e Mobin vol-I ch.100.

⁴⁷. Ibid. ch.8 No.72

⁴⁸. Ibid. ch.8 No.13

⁴⁹. Kalam e Imam e Mobin vol-I ch.23

⁵⁰. Ibid. ch.82.

⁵¹. Pir Shams. Ginan No.3 v.4.

⁵². Kalam e Imam e Mobin, vol-I. ch.83.

⁵³. Mishka't, No.668.

⁵⁴. Ibid. No. 975.

⁵⁵. Kalam e Imam e Mobin, vol-I, ch.10.



denounced by our Holy Imam,⁵⁶ because that is the House of Allah⁵⁷ and, therefore, it should be revered and considered as such. Thus, when we go to jamatkhana, we should prepare ourselves mentally and physically under the impression that we are going to meet the Lord. We may not see Him physically but He watches over us.

The Holy Prophet has said: "Verily, Allah is with the jamat." Wherever the jamat assembles for prayer, that place is mosque or jamatkhana, with all its blessings. He also said: "Entire earth, except graves and toilet rooms, is considered to be mosque".⁵⁸ Our Holy Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had explained that in a town where one Ismaili family lived, the husband as the mukhi and his wife as the kameran should gather with their children as the jamat, in a corner of a room reserved for the religious purpose. That was their jamatkhana.

On the 26th of July 1982, at the Foundation ceremony of the Darkhana Jamatkhana at Burnaby B.C., our Holy Hazar Imam Mowlana Shah Karim al-Husaini spoke about the significance of a jamatkhana in the following historic words:

"A jamatkhana is a place
of congregation,
of order,
of peace,
of prayer,
of hope,
of humility, and
of brotherhood."

He further added:

"From it should come forth those THOUGHTS, those SENTIMENTS, those ATTITUDES, which bind men together and which unite. It has been conceived and will exist in a mood of friendship, courtesy and harmony."

⁵⁶. Ibid. ch.100.

⁵⁷. Ibid. ch.108.

⁵⁸. Bukhari ch.7 v.1



1991 and 2010 Between -Satpanth Jamat -History (35)

realpatidar.com

GUTH JAMAT

As explained above, jamat means community, group, all members of a Tariqah, etc. and 'guth' means: gathering of the momineen in a jamatkhana for religious purpose. Thus, guth-jamat means: members of the jamat present at a certain time, in jamatkhana, with their mukhi and kameran, appointed by the Holy Imam. There is no guth-jamat without the mukhi and the kameran.

Women sit in a separate section, in the prayer hall, where usually the wives of the mukhi and the kameran represent them and conduct all the ceremonies accordingly. All, without exception, follow the command of the mukhi. (see more under mukhi and kameran).

Our Holy Pir Shams (d.757/1356) had explained the importance of the guth, in his Mansamjhani, on page 17, as under:

Come in the guth and pray for forgiveness,
And remember the Lord therein.
Remain utmost humble in the guth,
And recite the sweet hymns (Ginans).
In the guth, go in front of your Murshid,
And seek forgiveness of your sins.
Attend the guth and sip the Aabe'safa,
And offer whatever you can afford.
Prostrate and pray in the guth,
And say the Name of your Lord repeatedly.
Remain extremely humble, express humility,
And avoid gossiping.
Remember! the guth is like the Ganga,^H
And keep your faith strong, righteously.

Our Holy Prophet has said: Prayer (with the jamat) is like bathing in a canal for purification.⁵⁹

DARKHANA

The actual Persian word is DARI KHANA, meaning: residence with big windows. Darikhana, or Darkhana, is the Seat of Imamate, the residence of the Holy Imam e' Zaman, and as such, it is the Centre or Headquarters for communication and guidance for the Ismailis all over the world. Officially, the present Darkhana is the Khadak jamatkhana at Bombay⁶⁰. It was appointed by our Holy Imam Mowlana Shah Hasanali Shah, after he moved to India from Iran in 1842. The first mukhi of the Darkhana was Hasanbhai, who died in 1878. The Holy Imam appointed Ladakbhai Haji as the new mukhi. The status of the Darkhana has not changed since. Our Holy Imam Mowlana Sultan Mohammed Shah had lived most of his life in Europe but the Darkhana remained in Bombay.⁶¹ Our Holy Hazar Imam has designated some territorial Darkhanas such as in London, Vancouver, Lisbon, and Karachi.

^H The sacred river in India. Hindus bathe in it for purification from sins.

⁵⁹ Mishka't, No.514

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.68

⁶¹ Kalame' Imamme' Mobin, Vol-I, p.68



realpatidar.com

The Holy Prophet had declared the Masjid-e-Nabvi, in Medina, as his Headquarters (Darkhana). It was the Islamic Centre of guidance and command. Mowla Ali had shifted his Darkhana to Kufa from Medina. Every Holy Imam has his Darkhana.

Bukhari and Muslim have reported that the Holy Prophet said: A prayer performed in his mosque (Darkhana) was thousand times better than said elsewhere, except in Kaba.⁶² About the sanctity and importance of a mosque (jamatkhana), our Holy Prophet said:

-Each step taken towards the mosque is a charity for the sake of God.⁶³

-Sit in mosque as near each other as possible.⁶⁴

-To attend mosque for prayer is better than praying whole night at home.⁶⁵

-Don't go to mosque if you are unclean.⁶⁶

-Do not stretch your legs in front of you while you are sitting in the mosque.⁶⁷

-Children without escort and mad persons are not allowed to enter a mosque.⁶⁸

-It was a habit of the Holy Prophet to visit the mosque before going to his residence whenever he returned from a trip outside Medina.⁶⁹

-Do not create a disturbance in the mosque."⁷⁰

-Leaders of the jamat should sit in the front rows."⁷¹

⁶². Mishka't, No.635.

⁶³. Mishka't, No.1791.

⁶⁴. Ibid. 1011, 1022

⁶⁵. Ibid. 1295

⁶⁶. Ibid. 421.

⁶⁷. Siratun Nabi, vol-II, p.22 .

⁶⁸. Ibid. p.20 .

⁶⁹. Mishka't, No.648.

⁷⁰. Ibid. No. 1010

⁷¹. Ibid. No.1037



CODE OF CONDUCT IN JAMATKHANA.

- a) A jamatkhana is the House of Noore' Imamate, therefore, it must be respected highly.
- b) Men and women sit in their respective section. They should not move to other section until the ceremonies are over.
- c) Pause at the entrance of the prayer hall, bow and say Hai Zindah in a low voice.
- d) Try to come to jamatkhana a few minutes earlier than the time of the Holy Dua', pay your homage to the Lord at the hands of the mukhi or the kameeria. Sit in the front rows, as near as possible. Greet smilingly your brothers on your right and on your left with Ya Ali madad. Our Holy Prophet said that a smile is also an act of charity.
- e) Take out your tasbeeh and say "ASTAGH FIRULLAH" 33 times and SALWAAT 33 times before the prayer. There is a Holy Farman of Mowlana Hazar Imam to keep a tasbeeh in your pocket always. Remember the Lord frequently, also, during the day whenever it is possible.
- f) Be courteous toward the brothers who follow you in the queue, for dua' karavi or partaking the holy niaz. Be brief in your performance.
- g) A jamatkhana is the Paradise on earth, hence utmost cleanliness should be observed. Have a wash or bath before coming to jamatkhana, and if possible, use some non-alcoholic perfume. The Holy Prophet liked perfume.
- h) It is a bad manner to sneeze or cough loudly. Try to repress it with a handkerchief.
- i) Do not blow your nose turbulently; gently press your nostrils in your handkerchief and wipe it clean.
- j) Do not chew gum or candy or beetle leaf or anything in jamatkhana. It is a bad manner.
- k) Do not stretch your legs in front of you where you prostrate. If you are tired sitting, change your posture without stretching your legs in front of you or go out and come back.
- l) Sit or stand in humility and respectfully at all times in the presence of the Lord.
- m) Avoid talking. Listen, attentively, to the Holy Farman or the Ginan being sung or the sermon being delivered by an Alwaiz. It is a part of our worship and our spiritual obligation.
- n) It is respectful not to go to the main paat for dua' karavi during the recitation of the Holy Farman or a Ta'liqa. Or while a sermon is delivered.
- o) Do not exchange worldly affairs with others in the prayer hall, go out and talk.
- p) If you do not want to take away a Naadi, go out of the prayer hall immediately after the prayer to avoid crowding.
- q) It is a bad manner to reserve a seat by keeping your tasbeeh at the place. You may keep a handkerchief but certainly not the tasbeeh. Every bead of your tasbeeh is charged spiritually with the Divine Name of your Lord. You have used it hundreds or thousands of times with the Divine Name. A tasbeeh is a symbol of religiosity and devotion. Respect it.
- r) It is contrary to the humility of a worshipper to sit in a chair inside the prayer hall during the prayer and the religious ceremonies. Chairs may be provided for the invalids only outside the prayer hall. A person who is able to sit on the floor but chooses to sit on the chair violates the spiritual bond between him and the Creator. He commits a sin of insulting God. Nowhere does a mosque accommodate chairs because it is unIslamic.
- s) It is improper for a person to use a chair, even outside the prayer hall, if he is able to sit on the floor. It is an act of disrespect. Be humble in the presence of your Lord and sit on the floor.
- t) It is a Farman of our Holy Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah not to allow outsiders in to jamatkhana⁷² According to the Canon of Tariqat, the Ismailis are the spiritual children of the Holy Imam. He is the Spiritual Father and Mother. Outsiders can not attend the gathering of the Spiritual Family. A spiritual child is a person who has performed bai'at of the Holy Imam.

⁷². Kalam e Imam e Mobin, vol-I, ch.204.



1991 and 2010 Between -Satpanth Jamat -History (35)

- u) Attendance of Jamatkhana in black dress is contrary to our principles of faith. It is a distinction between the Ismailis and other Shias who mourn their Imams by wearing black. We do not; because our Imam is always alive and present.⁷³
- v) Do not eat or drink or chew anything during the Prayer. It is a disrespect in the presence of the Lord.

⁷³. Read my article on Black Clothes.



realpatidar.com

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AN ADVANCED HISTORY OF INDIA. R.C.Majumdar M.A. Ph.D.
McMillan & Co., London. 1953.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ISMAILISM. Abualy A. Aziz,
The Ismailia Association for Tanzania, Dar es Salaam. 1974.

ABUALY'S SERIES NO.6. Abualy A. Aziz,
Vancouver. 1990

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ISMAILIS. Farhad Daftary,
Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh. U.K. 1998

COLLECTANEA PART-I. V.N. Hooda and W. Ivanow,
Leiden. 1948

CONCISE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ISLAM. Cyril Glasse',
Harper, San Francisco. U.S.A. 1991

ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA

GINAN, Pir Shams.
The Ismailia Association, Bombay. 1951.

HOLY BIBLE

HOLY QURA'N -Various translations

ISMAILI TARIQAH PART-I. Abualy A. Aziz,
Islamic Literary and Cultural Society,
Toronto. Canada. 1985

JESUS IN HEAVEN ON EARTH. Khwaja Nazir Ahmed,
The Woking Muslim Mission, Woking. U.K. 1952

KALAME' IMAME' MOBIN (Gujrati),
Ismaili Press, Bombay. India. 1951

MANSAMJHANI, Pir Shams, (khojki),
Khoja Sindhi Press, Bombay. India. 1912

MESSAGE,
Unknown Publisher, Bombay.

realpatidar.com



1991 and 2010 Between -Satpanth Jamat -History (35)

realpatidar.com

MISHKAT. EL MASABEEH, Tradition of the Holy Prophet, (Urdu),
Urdu Bazar, Delhi, India. 1940

MYSTICAL DIMENSIONS OF ISLAM. Annemarie Schimmel,
University of North Carolina Press,
Chapel Hill. U.S.A. 1975

NURUM MOBIN (Urdu). A.J. Chunara,
Ismaili Press, Bombay, India. 1936

RELIGION OF ISLAM. Maulvi Mohammed Ali,
The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam,
Lahore, Pakistan. 1936.

THE SACRED CHAIN, THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS,. Norman F.Cantor,
Harper Collins, New York. U.S.A. 1994

SAINT PETER. Michael Grant,
Scribner, New York. U.S.A. 1994

SATVENI NI VAIL (khojki). Sayyid Nur Mohammed Shah.
Khoja Sindhi P. Press, Bombay. 1924

SIRATUN NABI (Urdu). Shibli Nomani,
Azamgadh, India. 1913.

TANGANYIKA. J.F.R. Hill,
The Government of Tanganyika,
Dar es salaam. 1955.

TARIKHE' GULZAR SHAMS TABRIZ (Urdu). Mulk Shah,
Multan. Pakistan. 1914.

TRADITIONS OF PROPHET MOHAMMED.
Abu Da'ood,
Bukhari,
Muslim,

ZANZIBAR. Major F.B. Pearce,
T. Fisher Unwin, London. U.K778778. 1920

GLOSSARY

Ahl-Bait Progeny of the Holy Prophet.

realpatidar.com



1991 and 2010 Between -Satpanth Jamat -History (35)

Batin	Hidden, secret, esoteric.
Guth-Jamat	Gathering of Jamat in jamatkhana.
Imam	Holder of the Noor of Ali.
Khalifa	Caliph.
Karma	Actions, deeds.
Noor	Light of God.
Pir	Holder of the Noor of Mohammed.
Satpanth	True Path.
Shia'	Lover of Mowla Ali.
Sunni	One does not love Mowla Ali.
Swaab	Spiritual benefit.
Taqiyya	To hide.
Tariqah	System, way, method.
Umma	Mulims of whole world as one body
Zahir	Apparent, exoteric.